two Governments have agreed to make mutually beneficial arrangements for the use of their waterways, railways and roadways for commerce between the two countries and for passage of goods between the two places in one country through the territory of the other.

During the 5th meeting of India-Bangladesh Joint Economic Commission held in March, 1997, it was decided to set up a Group of Experts to examine and make recommendations on the issue of border trade. Two other issues namely transshipment of goods from one point in India to another through Bangladesh territory in pursuance of Article VIII of the bilateral Trade Agreement and deepening of tariff concessions were also assigned to this Group at the meeting of the two Commerce Ministers in 1999.

During subsequent bilateral discussions, however, Bangladesh side did not agree to discuss transshipment.

(b) and (c) The provisions in the Agreement on revised Travel Arrangement between India and Bangladesh provide that nationals of one country transiting through the other country by land, river or air routes will be required to have a transit visa to be availed of within one month of its issue, valid for a stay upto a maximum of 15 days from the date of entry subject to the production of one way confirmed air/bus ticket.

Need for common market in South Asia on the pattern of EU

2726. DR. AKHILESH DAS: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Minister of External Affairs, while addressing a trade delegation from Pakistan alongwith the representatives of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry in New Delhi on 7th June, 2003, stressed the need for forming a common market in South Asia on the pattern of European Union (EU);

(b) if so, what was the Pak delegation's and Pak Government's response thereto; and

(c) the steps taken by Government on their own towards formation of such a union/common market?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI CHENNAMANENI VIDYASAGAR RAO): (a) Minister

of External Affairs, while addressing a business delegation from Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry and representatives of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry on July 7, 2003, *inter-alia* reiterated India's commitment to the concept of a South Asian Union.

(b) Pakistan has so far not reacted positively to India's declared readiness to enter into discussions to work towards a South Asian Union.

(c) South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) member countries are exchanging tariff concessions under SAARC Preferential Trading Arranagement (SAPTA). A Committee of Experts has been constituted to draft a Comprehensive Treaty Regime for establishing a Free Trade Area in the South Asian region.

Potential of Indian Manufacturing Sector

†2727. SHRI DATTA MEGHE: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce (IACC) had suggested a six point programme to Government to increase competitive potential and global operation of the Indian Manufacturing Sector;

(b) whether according to the IACC, Indian companies can establish their manufacturing facilities in different parts of the world in marketing conditions; and

(c) if so, Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI CHENNAMANENI VIDYASAGAR RAO): (a) to (c) The IACC has conducted an in-house study in this regard which had not been submitted to the Government.

Rate contract for purchase of computer systems

2728. SHRI A. VIJAYARAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether competent authority issued an office memorandum during December, 1998 on purchase of computer systems by Government Departments;

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.